

How to spot the winners at Expo West

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Doing Natural Products Expo West comprehensively guarantees sore feet, lower back pain and a post-Expo case of the blues that is undeniably linked to the excitement of the weekend. It is always nice to see people you met the year before or even those who call on you regularly. It can be truly fun as an all-out social event, but there's one little consideration: You're there to buy. You need to pick the winners out of the sea of samples.

Figuring out how to look behind the façade and catch what your customers will want is challenging under any conditions. Add in a few semi-naked sample servers or free autographed books, and clarity becomes even more evasive. How do you know which will be the best sellers, the hot new products, the ones that your pickiest customers will traverse the aisles to find? Arm yourself in Anaheim with these 10 tips, and you may find yourself gliding through the show and out the doors to meet Mickey before you know it.

Tip #7:

Seek out marketing savvy

Watch out for the new generation of savvy marketers on their way up from inside the business world. One new company, Pixie Maté of Boulder, Colo., was started by a couple of youngsters, T.J. McIntyre and Duane Primozich, who launched a well-known spice line with Frontier Natural Products Co-op, followed by a stint of product development projects on the SunSoy and Silk brands at White Wave.

And then there is Palo Hawken, the son of Smith & Hawken founder Paul Hawken, Mr. Green Economy and author of *Growing a Business* (Simon & Schuster, 1988). Paul is a hero to many of us old-timers. It's no surprise that the Bossa Nova açai drink Palo is working on has made serious inroads in mainstream and naturals stores.

Good luck, and see you at Expo.

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